



MAMLECHET HACHAI: ANIMAL PAIN

WE KNOW THAT THERE ARE MANY EXAMPLES OF HOW JUDAISM TEACHES US THAT IT'S WRONG TO TAKE THE LIFE OF AN ANIMAL,

- This is true even though the Torah says that they were created for our needs.
- Of course, we know that animals have a living soul—they feel pain and fear and hunger as we do.
- So the basic idea we are taught is not to violate what in Hebrew is known as tza'ar ba'alei hayyim—i.e., not to unnecessarily create “pain of living beings.”

SO WHAT DOES JUDAISM TEACH IS “UNNECESSARY” PAIN THAT WE SHOULD NOT CAUSE ANIMALS?

- The rabbis of the Talmud, one of our holiest books, said that the verse in the Book of Psalms—“Happy is the person who has not walked and talked with those who are very bad people”—refers to people who hunt animals only for sport or entertainment as “very bad.”
- So Judaism is teaching us that we should not hunt and kill animals just because we think it's fun or interesting or exciting.
- What do you think about hunting just for the sport or fun of it?
- Do you know what Judaism teaches about hunting animals to earn a living?
 1. It is permitted, but it is regarded as “questionable and shameful,” something to be avoided if at all possible.
 2. And the killing must be done in a way that is least painful to the animals.

WHAT DOES JUDAISM TEACH IS “NECESSARY” PAIN THAT WE ARE PERMITTED TO CAUSE TO ANIMALS?

- When is it Jewishly okay to cause pain to animals?
- The Sefer haHinnukh, which was written about 600 years ago by a rabbi who wanted to teach his son about the Torah, says we may kill animals only for three reasons:

1. for food
 2. for health
 3. for offerings (to God in the Temple at Jerusalem, which of course was destroyed nearly two thousand years ago)
- The rabbis also said we may kill animals for two other reasons:
 1. for clothing
 2. to protect human life (e.g., to stop a rabid dog)
 - When do you think it might be okay and when might it not be okay to kill a poisonous snake?



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